DOCTOR STRANGE
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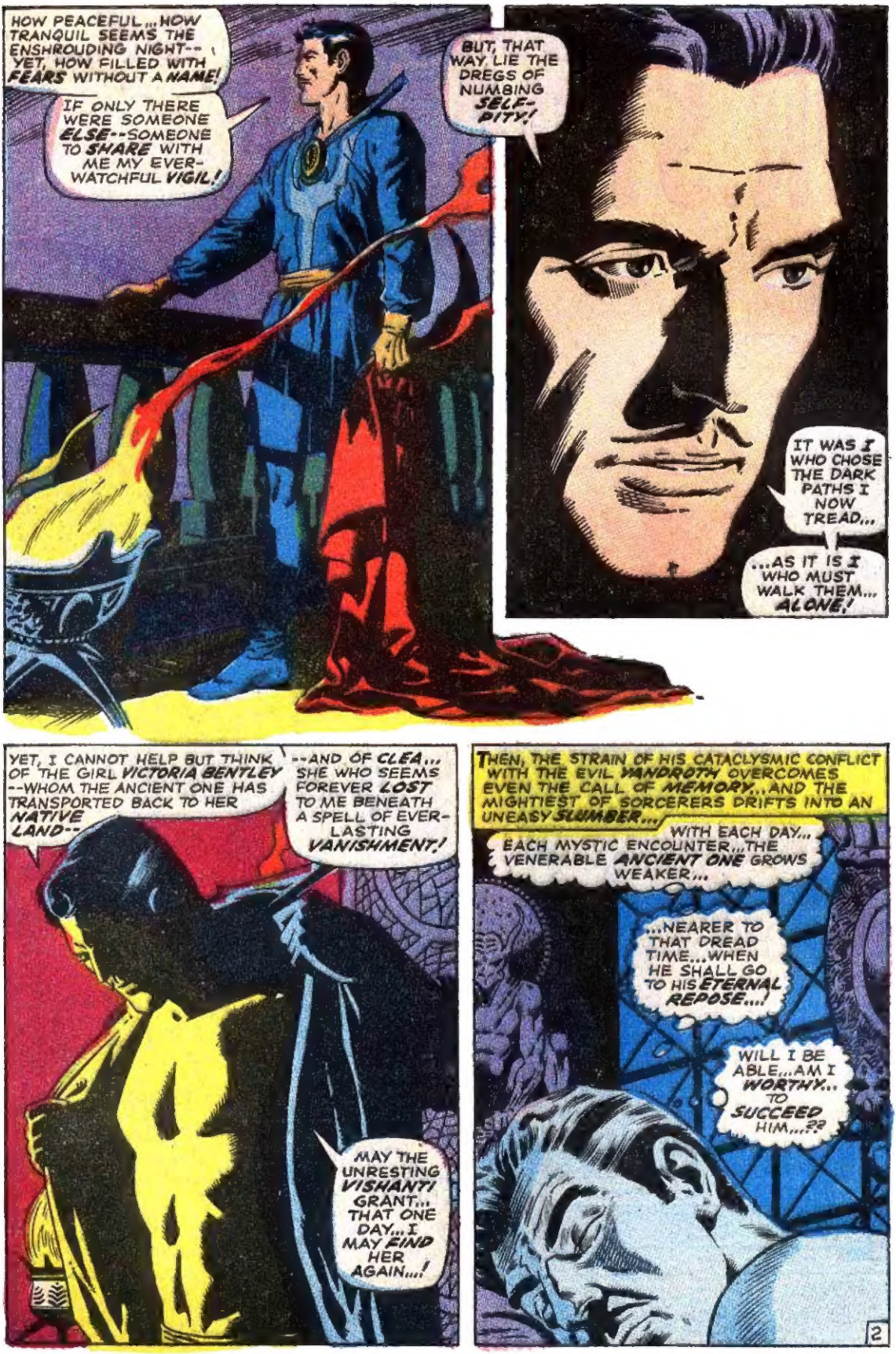
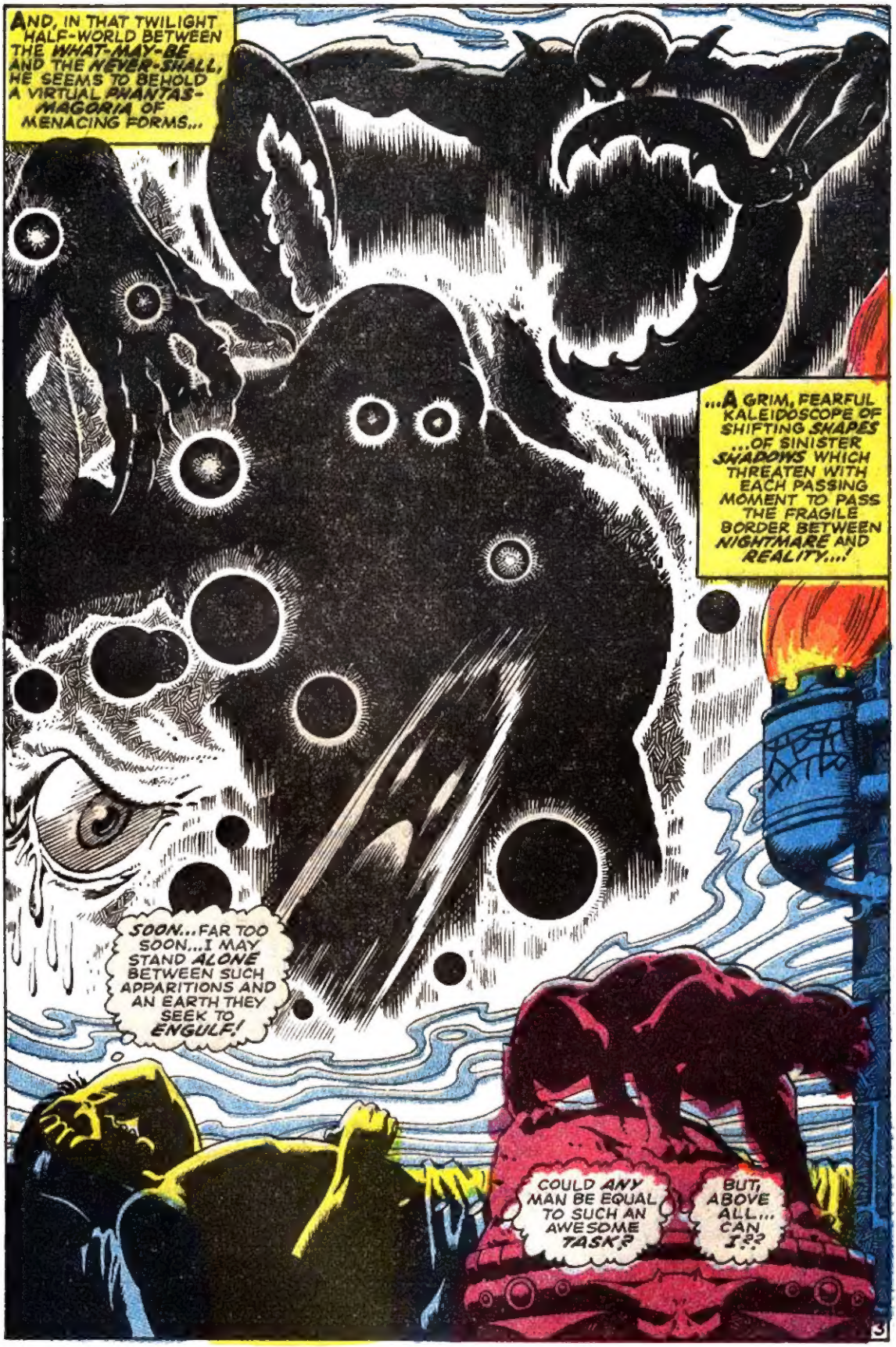
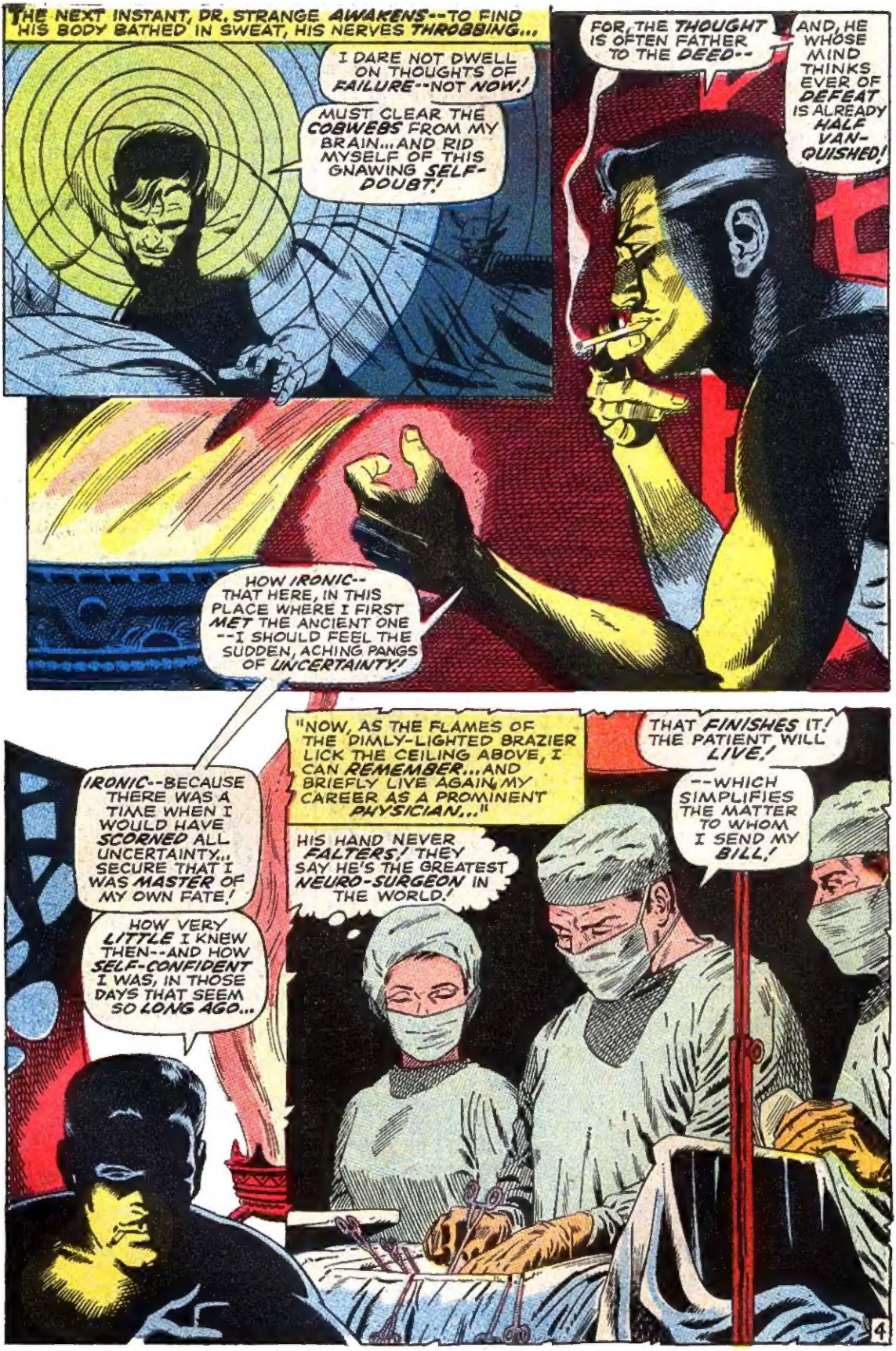
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
12¢ IND.
169 JUNE
MCG
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!
HIS ORIGIN AT LAST!
NOW UNTO US IS BORN... THE MAGICIAN!

"THE COMING OF... DR. STRANGE"
EVEN A MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS MUST KNOW THE BALM OF REST! AND SO, IN THE SHADOWY HIMALAYAN RETREAT OF THE MYSTERIOUS ANCIENT ONE...
THE WEARINESS OF A THOUSAND BATTLES SORELY OPPRESSES ME!
I MUST SLEEP... THAT I MAY THUS REGAIN NEEDED STRENGTH!
FOR, WHO KNOWS WHAT PHANTOM TERRORS THE MORROW MAY BRING?
AND, WHATEVER THEY BE, DR. STRANGE MUST BE READY TO FACE THEM!
LET THE WORD GO FORTH!
WITHIN THESE HALLOWED PAGES LIES THE FIRST OF MANY TALISMANIC TRIUMPHS BY THE TALENTED TEAM OF:
STAN LEE.....EDITOR
ROY THOMAS....WRITER
DAN ADKINS.....ARTIST
SUPERBLY SUPPORTED BY:
ARTIE SIMEK.....LETTERER


HOW PEACEFUL... HOW TRANQUIL SEEMS THE ENSHROUDING NIGHT-- YET, HOW FILLED WITH FEARS WITHOUT A NAME!
IF ONLY THERE WERE SOMEONE ELSE--SOMEONE TO SHARE WITH ME MY EVER-WATCHFUL VIGIL!
BUT, THAT WAY LIE THE DREGS OF NUMBING SELF-PITY!
IT WAS I WHO CHOSE THE DARK PATHS I NOW TREAD...
...AS IT IS I WHO MUST WALK THEM... ALONE!
YET, I CANNOT HELP BUT THINK OF THE GIRL VICTORIA BENTLEY --WHOM THE ANCIENT ONE HAS TRANSPORTED BACK TO HER NATIVE LAND--
--AND OF CLEA... SHE WHO SEEMS FOREVER LOST TO ME BENEATH A SPELL OF EVER-LASTING VANISHMENT!
MAY THE UNRESTING VISHANTI GRANT... THAT ONE DAY... I MAY FIND HER AGAIN...!
THEN, THE STRAIN OF HIS CATACLYSMIC CONFLICT WITH THE EVIL VANDROTH OVERCOMES EVEN THE CALL OF MEMORY... AND THE MIGHTIEST OF SORCERERS DRIFTS INTO AN UNEASY SLUMBER...
WITH EACH DAY... EACH MYSTIC ENCOUNTER... THE VENERABLE ANCIENT ONE GROWS WEAKER...
...NEARER TO THAT DREAD TIME... WHEN HE SHALL GO TO HIS ETERNAL REPOSE...!
WILL I BE ABLE... AM I WORTHY... TO SUCCEED HIM...??
2


AND, IN THAT TWILIGHT HALF-WORLD BETWEEN THE WHAT-MAY-BE AND THE NEVER-SHALL, HE SEEMS TO BEHOLD A VIRTUAL PHANTASMAGORIA OF MENACING FORMS...
...A GRIM, FEARFUL KALEIDOSCOPE OF SHIFTING SHAPES ...OF SINISTER SHADOWS WHICH THREATEN WITH EACH PASSING MOMENT TO PASS THE FRAGILE BORDER BETWEEN NIGHTMARE AND REALITY...!
SOON...FAR TOO SOON...I MAY STAND ALONE BETWEEN SUCH APPARITIONS AND AN EARTH THEY SEEK TO ENGULF!
COULD ANY MAN BE EQUAL TO SUCH AN AWESOME TASK?
BUT, ABOVE ALL... CAN I??
3

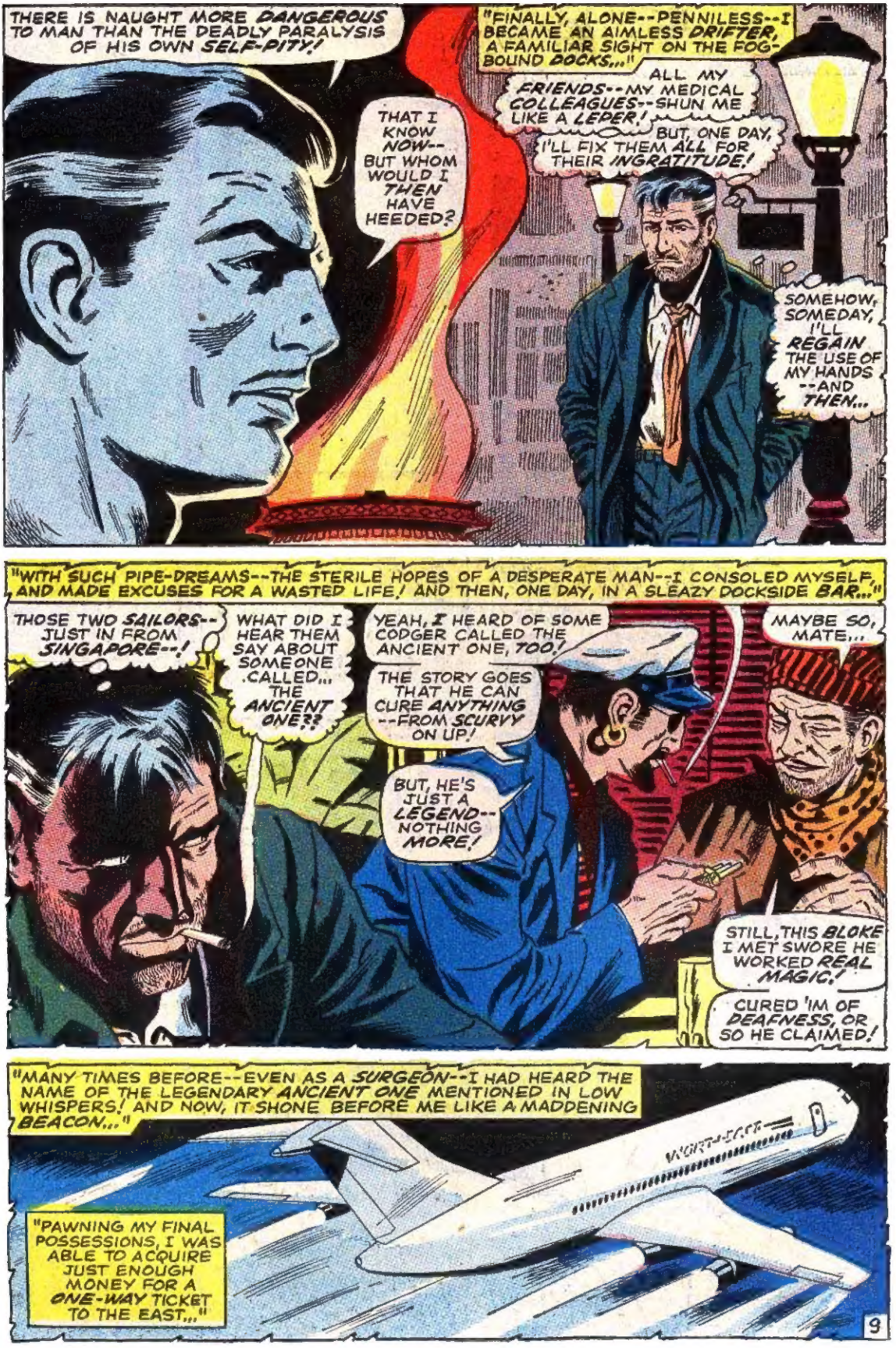

THE NEXT INSTANT, DR. STRANGE AWAKENS--TO FIND HIS BODY BATHED IN SWEAT, HIS NERVES THROBBING...
I DARE NOT DWELL ON THOUGHTS OF FAILURE--NOT NOW!
MUST CLEAR THE COBWEBS FROM MY BRAIN...AND RID MYSELF OF THIS GNAWING SELF-DOUBT!
FOR, THE THOUGHT IS OFTEN FATHER TO THE DEED--
AND, HE WHOSE MIND THINKS EVER OF DEFEAT IS ALREADY HALF VAN-QUISHED!
HOW IRONIC--THAT HERE, IN THIS PLACE WHERE I FIRST MET THE ANCIENT ONE --I SHOULD FEEL THE SUDDEN, ACHING PANGS OF UNCERTAINTY!
IRONIC--BECAUSE THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WOULD HAVE SCORNED ALL UNCERTAINTY,, SECURE THAT I WAS MASTER OF MY OWN FATE!
HOW VERY LITTLE I KNEW THEN--AND HOW SELF-CONFIDENT I WAS, IN THOSE DAYS THAT SEEM SO LONG AGO...
"NOW, AS THE FLAMES OF THE DIMLY-LIGHTED BRAZIER LICK THE CEILING ABOVE, I CAN REMEMBER...AND BRIEFLY LIVE AGAIN MY CAREER AS A PROMINENT PHYSICIAN..."
HIS HAND NEVER FALTERS! THEY SAY HE'S THE GREATEST NEURO-SURGEON IN THE WORLD!
THAT FINISHES IT! THE PATIENT WILL LIVE!
--WHICH SIMPLIFIES THE MATTER TO WHOM I SEND MY BILL!
4

"YES, SUCH WAS THE STEPHEN STRANGE THAT MEN KNEW--HAUGHTY, SELF-CENTERED, BUT ABOVE ALL....SUCCESSFUL!"
ANOTHER FIVE FIGURES FOR THE BANK ACCOUNT!
MY CHECKING ACCOUNT, THAT IS!
DOCTOR--I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU WHAT AN HONOR IT WAS TO ASSIST YOU--!
SAVE IT, NURSE! I'VE GOT A DATE WITH MY STOCK BROKER!
BUT, I--YES, DOCTOR!
"MONEY--RICHES--FAME! ONLY SUCH FLEETING PLEASURES AS THOSE HAD ANY MEANING FOR ME..."
CHARITY WORK? YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING, DR. BENTON!
STILL, I THOUGHT PERHAPS --IN THIS CASE--
THESE ARE THE MOST TALENTED HANDS IN THE ANNALS OF MEDICINE!
THEY DON'T TOUCH A BAND-AID FOR ANYTHING BUT CASH!
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO HASTY!
I MIGHT AGREE TO HELP YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT--FOR A SLIGHTLY REDUCED FEE--
--IF YOU AGREED TO NAME ANY CURES WE MIGHT DISCOVER AFTER ME!
I'M AFRAID YOUR FEES ARE A BIT OUT OF OUR LEAGUE, DR. STRANGE!
BUT, PERHAPS YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND--ON THE DAY YOU REJOIN THE HUMAN RACE!
"JUST THEN, THE PHONE RANG, AND..."
AH, HELLO, MRS. VAN HEUSEN! I WAS EXPECTING YOUR CALL!
ER, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, DR. BENTON--!
CERTAINLY! I WAS JUST LEAVING!
NOW WE CAN SPEAK MORE FREELY, MY DEAR WOMAN!
A PARTY AT YOUR ESTATE THIS EVENING? I'D BE DELIGHTED TO ATTEND--!
THESE MEMORIES ARE PAINFUL--FULL OF STINGING VENOM!
AND YET, THEY ARE NECESSARY, TO COMBAT THE PENT-UP IRRESOLUTION WHICH THREATENS TO OVERWHELM ME...!
"THE RAIN OUTSIDE HAD STOPPED--THE MOON SHONE BRIGHTLY...AS MY NEW SPORTS CAR SPED DOWN A TORTUOUS ROAD..."
MRS. VAN HEUSEN IS ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST WOMEN IN THE STATE!
AND, IT'S WELL KNOWN THAT SHE NEEDS A MINOR OPERATION!
IF SHE CHOOSES ME AS HER SURGEON, I'LL SOON BE UP TO MY SHEEPSKIN IN RICH PATIENTS!
"BUT, THOUGH THE SKY WAS CLEAR, THE WINDING ROAD WAS STILL WET, TREACHEROUS..."
5

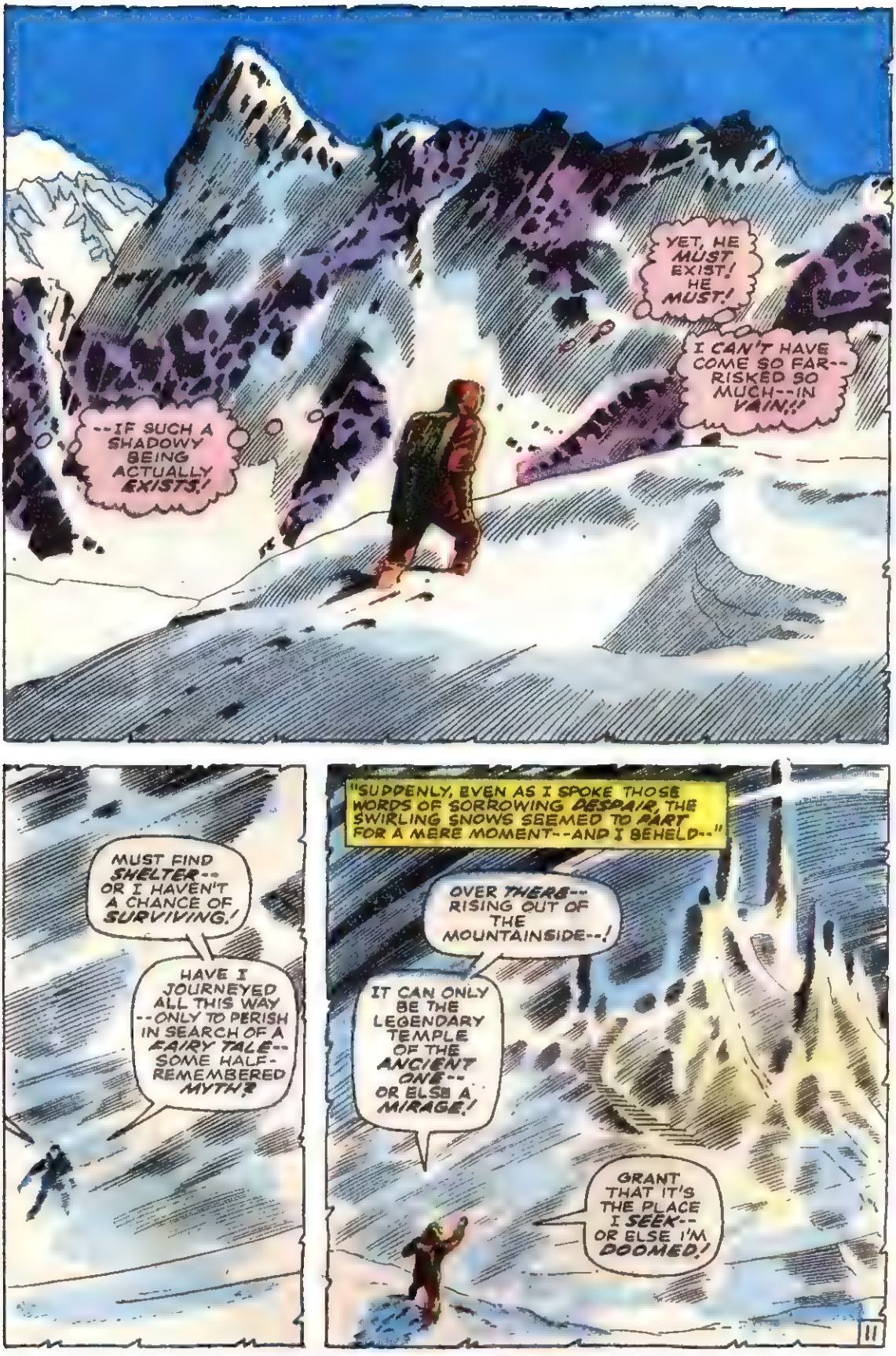
"AND THEN, IN ONE SEARING, UNFORGETTABLE INSTANT--IT WAS ALL OVER--!"
GOOD LORD!
NO--NO!!
EEEEEEEEEEE
"FOR WHAT SEEMED A FLEETING MOMENT--AND AT THE SAME TIME AN INTERMINABLE ETERNITY--I FELT MYSELF CAUGHT IN AN IRRESISTIBLE VORTEX, A WHIRLPOOL OF WEIGHTLESSNESS..."
"THE FOLLOWING SECOND, I STRUCK SOLID GROUND WITH SHATTERING FORCE--AND I, WHO HAD PROFITED FROM THE ANGUISH OF OTHERS, KNEW FOR THE FIRST TIME THE TRUE MEANING OF--PAIN!"
SOMEONE... HELP ME...
HELP ME... PLEASE
6

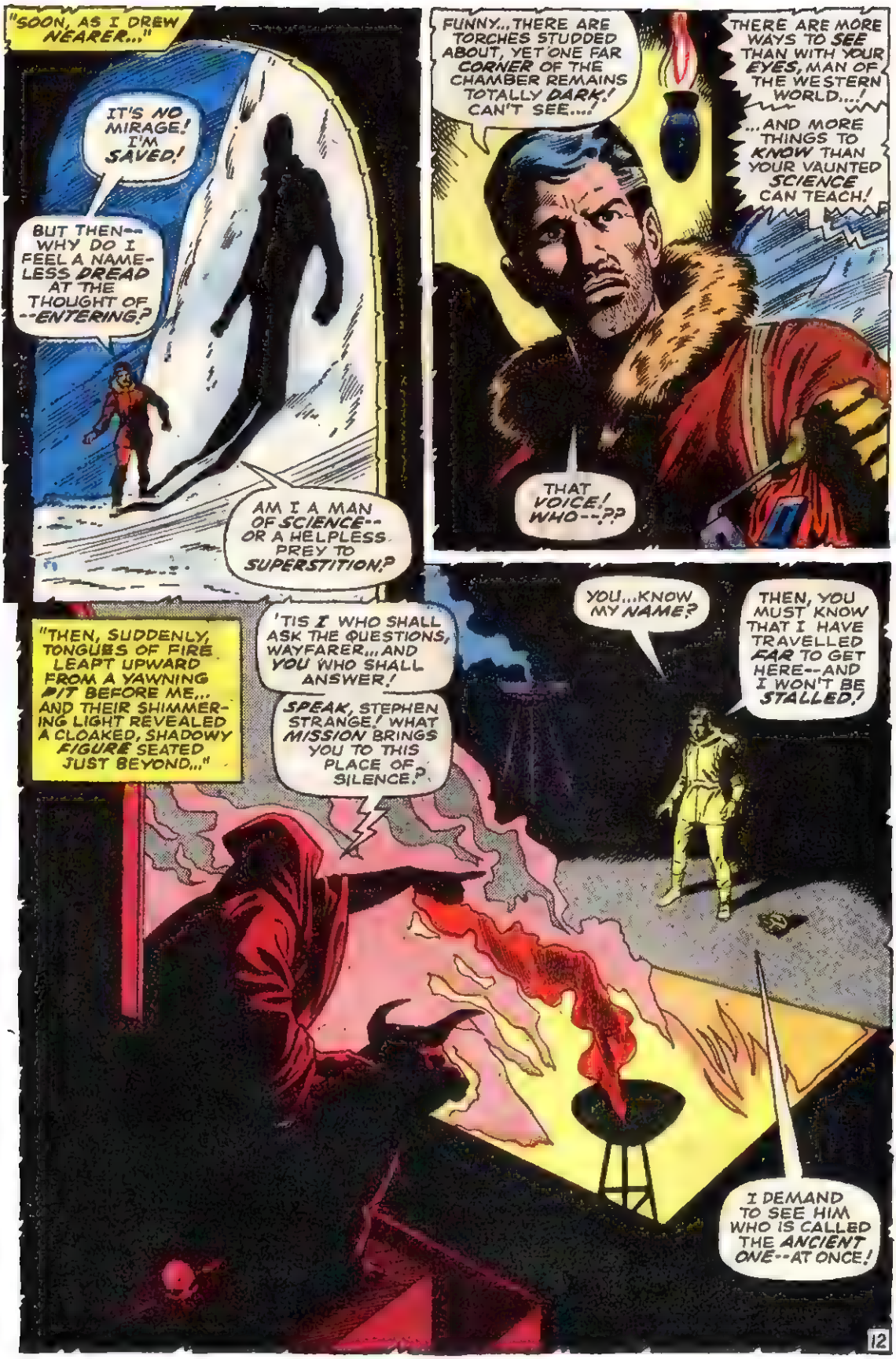
"A LIFETIME LATER, I AWOKE--TO SEE..."
AN EYE--HUGE, MERCILESS--GAZING DOWN AT ME--!
IS THIS SOME MADDENING DREAM--AM I DEAD--OR--??
"THEN, SLOWLY, THE BLAZING, SOUL-DISCERNING EYE RECEDED--BECAME AS ONE WITH A FACE--A HUMAN FORM..."
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN HEAR ME, SON...
SPEAK UP, MAN! TELL ME...HOW BAD IT IS! I CAN...TAKE IT!
YOUR IDENTIFICATION SAYS YOU'RE A DOCTOR YOURSELF...!
SO, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHEN I TELL YOU...
WE SAVED YOUR LIFE--BUT YOU'LL NEVER PERFORM AN OPERATION AGAIN!
"INSTANTLY, WITH A SPEED AND STRENGTH I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED POSSIBLE, I GRASPED THE PHYSICIAN'S COLLAR--"
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, YOU PHONY?
IF MY HANDS WERE PERMANENTLY INJURED, COULD I DO THIS??
SURE, THEY SEEM ALL RIGHT--BUT TRY HOLDING A STEADY SCALPEL IN THEM!
THE NERVES HAVE BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED--BEYOND ALL HOPE OF RECOVERY!
"SOON, WHEN I HAD CALMED DOWN ENOUGH TO EXPERIMENT FOR MYSELF, I KNEW THAT THE MAN BEFORE ME...WAS RIGHT!"
"AND, IN THAT MOMENT, I MADE A FATEFUL DECISION..."
YOU MEAN...YOU'LL GIVE UP THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE...FOREVER?
BUT, THERE'S NO NEED FOR SUCH A WASTE!
YOU CAN OPERATE AS A CONSULTANT--ANOTHER SURGEON'S ASSISTANT!
STEPHEN STRANGE ASSISTS NOBODY!
I'M GIVING UP THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE--FOR GOOD!

"HOWEVER, IN THE DISMAL, BROODING MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, I WAS FINALLY FORCED TO FACE THE ULTIMATE TRUTH--THAT IT WAS ACTUALLY MEDICINE WHICH WAS FINISHED WITH ME..."
I'VE SPENT EVERY CENT I HAD--ON EXPENSIVE OPERATIONS--
--HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT ONE OF THEM WOULD RESTORE MY ABILITIES!
YET, THOUGH NOTHING SEEMS OUTWARDLY WRONG WITH THEM--
--THE STEADINESS, THE DELICATE DEFTNESS WHICH A SURGEON NEEDS...ARE GONE FOREVER!
SO, HERE'S TO STEPHEN STRANGE...!
HE MADE A FORTUNE WITH TWO TALENTED HANDS--ONLY TO SEE IT VANISH IN A SINGLE, SENSELESS SECOND--
--LEAVING HIM WITH... A FISTFUL OF AIR!
"THEN, SUDDENLY..."
KRAA-SH!
WHY? WHY ME?
WHY NOT SOMEONE ELSE... ANYBODY ELSE?
WHY??
"BUT, MY ONLY ANSWER WAS THE SHATTERING MOCKERY OF SILENCE!"
8


THERE IS NAUGHT MORE DANGEROUS TO MAN THAN THE DEADLY PARALYSIS OF HIS OWN SELF-PITY!
THAT I KNOW NOW-- BUT WHOM WOULD I THEN HAVE HEEDED?
"FINALLY, ALONE--PENNILESS--I BECAME AN AIMLESS DRIFTER, A FAMILIAR SIGHT ON THE FOG-BOUND DOCKS..."
ALL MY FRIENDS--MY MEDICAL COLLEAGUES--SHUN ME LIKE A LEPER!
BUT, ONE DAY, I'LL FIX THEM ALL FOR THEIR INGRATITUDE!
SOMEHOW, SOMEDAY, I'LL REGAIN THE USE OF MY HANDS --AND THEN...
"WITH SUCH PIPE-DREAMS--THE STERILE HOPES OF A DESPERATE MAN--I CONSOLED MYSELF, AND MADE EXCUSES FOR A WASTED LIFE! AND THEN, ONE DAY, IN A SLEAZY DOCKSIDE BAR..."
THOSE TWO SAILORS-- JUST IN FROM SINGAPORE--!
WHAT DID I HEAR THEM SAY ABOUT SOMEONE CALLED... THE ANCIENT ONE??
YEAH, I HEARD OF SOME CODGER CALLED THE ANCIENT ONE, TOO!
THE STORY GOES THAT HE CAN CURE ANYTHING --FROM SCURVY ON UP!
BUT, HE'S JUST A LEGEND-- NOTHING MORE!
MAYBE SO, MATE...
STILL, THIS BLOKE I MET SWORE HE WORKED REAL MAGIC!
CURED 'IM OF DEAFNESS, OR SO HE CLAIMED!
"MANY TIMES BEFORE--EVEN AS A SURGEON--I HAD HEARD THE NAME OF THE LEGENDARY ANCIENT ONE MENTIONED IN LOW WHISPERS! AND NOW, IT SHONE BEFORE ME LIKE A MADDENING BEACON..."
"PAWNING MY FINAL POSSESSIONS, I WAS ABLE TO ACQUIRE JUST ENOUGH MONEY FOR A ONE-WAY TICKET TO THE EAST..."
9

"A FEW DAYS LATER FOUND ME WANDERING, ALONE, ACROSS THE TIMELESS, TRACKLESS WASTES OF THE HIMALAYAS--WITH NEITHER FAITH IN THE GOAL I WAS SEEKING, NOR THE COURAGE TO CONSIDER THE PROBABILITY OF FAILURE..."
FROM STORIES--TRADITIONS--HEARSAY--I'VE PIECED TOGETHER THE APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE WHERE THE SO-CALLED ANCIENT ONE DWELLS--
"THEN, AFTER SEVERAL FRUITLESS DAYS OF TREKKING..."
A SNOWSTORM COMING UP--!
BUT, I'VE GOT TO KEEP GOING--NO MATTER WHAT!
IF I TURN BACK NOW, I HAVE NOTHING TO LIVE FOR--NOTHING!
"WITHIN MINUTES, THE VERY AIR ABOUT ME WAS A WRITHING, ENSHROUDING SEA OF WHITENESS --WITHIN AN HOUR, I WAS HOPELESSLY LOST--"
SUCH A STORM MIGHT GO ON FOR DAYS--EVEN WEEKS!


--IF SUCH A SHADOWY BEING ACTUALLY EXISTS!
YET, HE MUST EXIST! HE MUST!
I CAN'T HAVE COME SO FAR--RISKED SO MUCH--IN VAIN!!
MUST FIND SHELTER--OR I HAVEN'T A CHANCE OF SURVIVING!
HAVE I JOURNEYED ALL THIS WAY--ONLY TO PERISH IN SEARCH OF A FAIRY TALE--SOME HALF-REMEMBERED MYTH?
"SUDDENLY, EVEN AS I SPOKE THOSE WORDS OF SORROWING DESPAIR, THE SWIRLING SNOWS SEEMED TO PART FOR A MERE MOMENT--AND I BEHELD--"
OVER THERE--RISING OUT OF THE MOUNTAINSIDE--!
IT CAN ONLY BE THE LEGENDARY TEMPLE OF THE ANCIENT ONE--OR ELSE A MIRAGE!
GRANT THAT IT'S THE PLACE I SEEK--OR ELSE I'M DOOMED!


"SOON, AS I DREW NEARER..."
IT'S NO MIRAGE! I'M SAVED!
BUT THEN--WHY DO I FEEL A NAMELESS DREAD AT THE THOUGHT OF--ENTERING?
AM I A MAN OF SCIENCE--OR A HELPLESS PREY TO SUPERSTITION?
FUNNY...THERE ARE TORCHES STUDDED ABOUT, YET ONE FAR CORNER OF THE CHAMBER REMAINS TOTALLY DARK! CAN'T SEE...!
THERE ARE MORE WAYS TO SEE THAN WITH YOUR EYES, MAN OF THE WESTERN WORLD...!
...AND MORE THINGS TO KNOW THAN YOUR VAUNTED SCIENCE CAN TEACH!
THAT VOICE! WHO--??
"THEN, SUDDENLY, TONGUES OF FIRE LEAPT UPWARD FROM A YAWNING PIT BEFORE ME... AND THEIR SHIMMERING LIGHT REVEALED A CLOAKED, SHADOWY FIGURE SEATED JUST BEYOND..."
'TIS I WHO SHALL ASK THE QUESTIONS, WAYFARER...AND YOU WHO SHALL ANSWER!
SPEAK, STEPHEN STRANGE! WHAT MISSION BRINGS YOU TO THIS PLACE OF SILENCE?
YOU...KNOW MY NAME?
THEN, YOU MUST KNOW THAT I HAVE TRAVELLED FAR TO GET HERE--AND I WON'T BE STALLED!
I DEMAND TO SEE HIM WHO IS CALLED THE ANCIENT ONE--AT ONCE!

DEMAND? WHO ARE YOU TO GIVE ORDERS TO ONE WHO HAS TROD THE UNNUMBERED CENTURIES?
FOR, I AM HE WHOM YOU SEEK! I AM CALLED... THE ANCIENT ONE!
AND, I SEE BEFORE ME ONE WHO HAS YET TO PROVE HIMSELF WORTHY OF THE POWER OF MY MAGIC!
YOU CAN'T TURN ME DOWN--AS IF I WERE SOME WHINING CHILD!
I WAS ONCE THE GREATEST SURGEON IN THE WORLD--
--AND I WILL BE AGAIN, WITH YOUR HELP--OR ELSE--
HALT, EMBITTERED ONE! SINCE TIME OUT OF MIND, NO ACT OF VIOLENCE HAS BEEN COMMITTED HERE!
NONE MAY LIFT A HAND AGAINST ONE WHO IS A MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!
I DIDN'T COME HERE BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN MAGIC, OLD MAN!
YOU'RE A TRICKSTER--SOME FAKER WITH KNOWLEDGE OF RARE, SECRET HERBS!
BUT, I MEAN TO SHARE THAT KNOWLEDGE--!
"YET, SCARCELY WERE MY CALLOUS WORDS UTTERED, THAN I FELT AN EERIE, ABRUPT WEIGHTLESSNESS--AND DISCOVERED, TO MY ASTONISHMENT.."
YOU'RE HOLDING ME MOTIONLESS...SUSPENDED OFF THE GROUND...WITH A MERE GESTURE!
IT'S...UNCANNY!
ANYTHING MAY APPEAR UNCANNY, MAN OF THE WESTERN WORLD--TO ONE WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND!
13

"THE NEXT SECOND, JUST AS SURPRISINGLY..."
I'M BEING LOWERED ...AS SLOWLY AS A FALLING LEAF!
IT'S ALL SOME SORT OF HYPNOSIS! IT MUST BE--!
BELIEVE WHAT YOU WILL, MY SON!
NONETHELESS, THE SNOW WHICH EVEN NOW SWIRLS ABOUT THIS TEMPLE FORCES YOU TO REMAIN... MY GUEST!
PERHAPS, BY THE TIME THAT IT THAWS, YOU SHALL FEEL DIFFERENTLY!
YOU OLD FRAUD! DON'T TRY TO IMPRESS STEPHEN STRANGE WITH YOUR PARLOR TRICKS!
IF YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE ME THINK YOU CAUSED THAT SNOWSTORM... FORGET IT!
IT IS NOT MY PLACE TO CONVINCE YOU OF ANYTHING, MY FRIEND!
IT IS RATHER FOR YOU TO PROVE TO ME THAT YOUR MOTIVES ARE AUGHT BUT SELFISH!
I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IT! I'VE WASTED MY TIME IN COMING HERE!
YET, WHERE ELSE WAS I TO GO? WHAT ELSE WAS I TO DO?
AND NOW, I MUST INTRODUCE YOU TO MY PUPIL-- MORDO!
"THE MAN WHO ENTERED AT THE ANCIENT ONE'S SUMMONS DID NOT SPEAK--BUT EYED ME WITH ILL-CONCEALED CONTEMPT..."
UH... MY PLEASURE ...MORDO!
THAT COLD, ALMOST MANIACAL STARE... AS IF HE SAW IN ME A FUTURE ENEMY!
BUT, THAT'S RIDICULOUS! I'VE COME HERE LOOKING FOR A CURE... AND NOTHING MORE!
14

"IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, I FELT A HELPLESS PRISONER..."
IT'S STILL SNOWING! WHAT ROTTEN LUCK!
WHAT'S MORE, THE SO-CALLED ANCIENT ONE NEVER EVEN SEES ME!
MAYBE A WALK WILL MAKE ME FEEL BETTER...
"SOON, AS I LISTENED TO THE ECHO OF MY OWN FOOTSTEPS DOWN THE COLD HALLWAY, I BEHELD IN HIS ROOM THE STRANGELY SINISTER MORDO..."
--PORING AS USUAL OVER HIS MYSTERIOUS, ESOTERIC SCROLLS...!"
THERE IS SOMETHING OVERWHELMINGLY DISTURBING ABOUT MORDO --SOMETHING THAT TELLS ME HE SHOULD NOT BE TRUSTED!
AND YET, THE ANCIENT ONE DOES NOT SEEM WORRIED, OR--
BUT, WHY DO I WASTE MY TIME THINKING OF HIM?
HE'S A CHARLATAN --A SENILE OLD MAN WHO MAY EVEN BELIEVE HE HAS MAGICAL POWERS!
THERE HE SITS--ALONE IN HIS DAMP, HALF-DARKENED STUDY--!
WAIT! WHY THIS SUDDEN CHILL THAT STRIKES TO THE MARROW OF MY BONES?
HE SEEMS TO FEEL IT, TOO!
"INDEED, EVEN AS THESE WORDS RAN THRU MY TROUBLED BRAIN, I HEARD THE ANCIENT ONE SPEAK..."
THE AIR IS SUDDENLY HEAVY WITH THE SCENT OF A SHAPELESS EVIL!
IS IT SOME FOE FROM THE NETHER REGIONS--SEEKING TO TAKE ME UNAWARES?

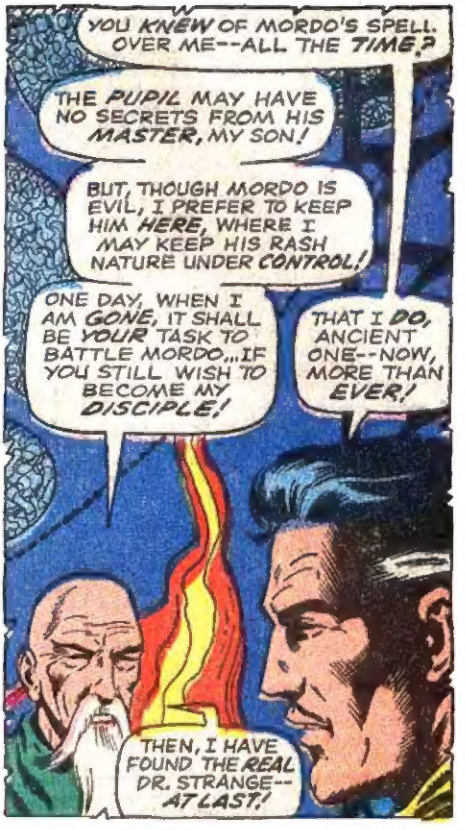
"AND, IN THAT STARTLING SECOND, I KNEW THE TRUTH..."
THE ONE WHO SEEKS TO MENACE THE ANCIENT ONE--IS HIS OWN PUPIL, MORDO!
LISTEN TO THAT INCANTATION HE'S SPOUTING--!
ACCEPT MY OFFERING OF INCENSE, O DREAD DORMAMMU!
LET THE OLD FOOL FEEL YOUR TOUCH OF DEATH--THE STING OF YOUR HATRED!
THUS PLEADS MORDO--HE WHO IS YOUR MOST FAITHFUL DISCIPLE!
DORMAMMU!? I'VE NEVER HEARD THAT NAME BEFORE--
YET, THE VERY SOUND OF IT FILLS ME SOMEHOW WITH... FEAR!
I MUST TELL THE ANCIENT ONE OF THIS--!
"BUT THEN, BEFORE I COULD TAKE A SINGLE STEP..."
YOU WHO STAND IN THE DARK SHADOWS--HALT!!
DID YOU IMAGINE YOU COULD SPY ON MORDO UNDETECTED?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND JUST WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, MORDO--
BUT YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH WHATEVER YOU'RE PLOTTING!
I'LL GO TO YOUR MASTER, AND--
WH--? I--CAN'T MOVE--!
NO PUNY HUMAN IS TRULY MORDO'S MASTER, FOOL--BUT ONLY THE GREAT DORMAMMU!
AS FOR YOU, WHO THINK YOU CAN BETRAY MY PLAN--
OBSERVE WHAT BEFALLS AT MY MEREST GESTURE!
"THEN, SUDDENLY..."
A FIERCE THROBBING--WITHIN MY BRAIN!
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME--??

SEE HOW SIMPLE IT WAS FOR ME TO STOP YOU IN YOUR TRACKS?
NOW, ONE MORE CHANTED SPELL... AND THE THREAT THAT YOU POSE WILL BE ENDED!
THIS CAN'T BE OCCURRING IT CAN'T!
MUST GATHER MY THOUGHTS-- AND RUSH HIM--!
"HOWEVER, I COULD NOT REALIZE HOW FORMIDABLE WERE THE POWERS OF DARKNESS AT MORDO'S DISPOSAL, AS..."
HEAR ME ONCE AGAIN, O DORMAMMU! LET THE VAPORS OF VALTORR CARRY OUT MY INNERMOST DESIRES!
LET THE LIPS OF THE WESTERN DOG BE FOREVER STILLED--
--SO THAT I AM SAFE TO DO YOUR BIDDING!
"AND, IN THAT SELFSAME MOMENT, I FOUND..."
AN IRON CLAMP--HAS FORMED AROUND MY MOUTH!
I CANNOT SPEAK-- CANNOT EVEN TOUCH IT!
IT'S ALL MORDO'S DOING --SOMEHOW! BUT, HE'S RETURNED TO HIS SECRET SPELLS!
AND NOW, DREAD ONE-- 'TIS THE HOUR TO STRIKE...!
EITHER MORDO DOES INDEED POSSESS THE POWER OF BLACK MAGIC, AS I HAVE NOT BELIEVED--
--OR ELSE HE HAS SOMEHOW HYPNOTIZED ME-- EVEN AGAINST MY WILL!
NO MATTER WHICH, HE INTENDS TO HARM THE ANCIENT ONE--
AND, ONLY I CAN STOP HIM!
MUST GO TO THE ANCIENT ONE--AND WARN HIM-- BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

"YET, PERHAPS IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE! FOR, AS I RUSHED DOWN THE MUSTY CORRIDOR--AND INTO MY MYSTERIOUS HOST'S SANCTUM SANCTORUM..."
WHAT EVIL IS THIS,? I AM ATTACKED--ENGULFED BY THE FIERCE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE!
I MUST ACT QUICKLY--OR BE FOREVER DOOMED!!
THOSE JADE-COLORED FLAMES--APPEARING FROM OUT OF NOWHERE--
THEY MUST BE MORDO'S HANDIWORK --SOME DIRE SPELL OF HIS!
THEN, IT'S TRUE! THERE IS SUCH A THING AS BLACK MAGIC--SORCERY WHICH CAN BE USED TO DESTROY ALL THAT IS GOOD IN THE WORLD!
WHAT CAN THE ANCIENT ONE DO AGAINST IT? HE'S OLD..., FEEBLE....!
18

"BUT, WITH MY WESTERNIZED WAY OF THINKING, I HAD CONFUSED THE INFIRMITY OF THE MIND WITH THAT OF THE BODY, FOR..."
BEGONE, FORCES OF DARKNESS!
BY THE POWER OF THE ALL-KNOWING VISHANTI!--BY THE VISION OF THE ALL-SEEING VISHANTI, I COMMAND YOU...
BEGONE!!
"IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE HEARTBEAT, THE CIRCLE OF EMERALD FIRE SEEMED TO FLARE UP...THEN VANISH INTO NOTHINGNESS...!"
THEY...ARE GONE! BUT, I MUST BE EVER ON MY GUARD!
SOMEONE... SOMEWHERE...IS EVER WAITING TO PIT THE POWERS OF EVIL AGAINST ME!
HE WON HIS BATTLE, SOMEHOW--BY SHEER WILL POWER!
STILL, I CAN SEE THAT IT WEAKENED HIM GREATLY--AND I CAN'T TELL HIM HIS ENEMY IS... MORDO!
WAIT! MORDO'S SPELL SAID I COULD NOT BETRAY HIM--BUT WHAT IF I SPOKE OTHER WORDS--?
ANCIENT ONE, I CRAVE A BOON--THOUGH I AM TOTALLY UNWORTHY TO RECEIVE IT!
I WISH TO STUDY AT YOUR FEET...LEARN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MYSTIC ARTS WHICH IS YOURS ALONE!
IT'S WORKING! I CAN SPEAK--EVEN WITH THE CLAMP ABOUT MY LIPS!
IN A MOMENT, YOU SHALL RECEIVE YOUR ANSWER, STEPHEN STRANGE!
BUT FIRST, GAZE IN YONDER MIRROR...!
IT'S BEYOND BELIEF! THE CLAMP ISN'T REALLY THERE!
THEN, IT EXISTS ONLY IN... MY MIND!
THE MIND, MY SON, IS THE TRUEST REALM OF ALL!
HE WHO CONTROLS IT... CONTROLS THE VERY SOUL OF ITS OWNER!
19

WAIT! I SPOKE OF THE CLAMP... THE RESULT OF MORDO'S EVIL SPELL!
HE SAID I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO! HE-- -UNNHH!-
MORDO KNOWS MUCH, MAN OF THE WESTERN WORLD--BUT HE DOES NOT KNOW ALL!
AND NOW, I SHALL RID YOU OF THE LAST VESTIGES OF THAT SPELL--
--THAT YOU MAY MORE FREELY SPEAK!


YOU KNEW OF MORDO'S SPELL OVER ME--ALL THE TIME?
THE PUPIL MAY HAVE NO SECRETS FROM HIS MASTER, MY SON!
BUT, THOUGH MORDO IS EVIL, I PREFER TO KEEP HIM HERE, WHERE I MAY KEEP HIS RASH NATURE UNDER CONTROL!
ONE DAY, WHEN I AM GONE, IT SHALL BE YOUR TASK TO BATTLE MORDO...IF YOU STILL WISH TO BECOME MY DISCIPLE!
THAT I DO, ANCIENT ONE--NOW, MORE THAN EVER!
THEN, I HAVE FOUND THE REAL DR. STRANGE--AT LAST!

AND, AS THE MIDNIGHT REVERIE OF THE MYSTIC MASTER ENDS, A HEAVY WEIGHT SEEMS LIFTED FROM HIS HEART...A NEW ENERGY REPLENISHES HIS WEARY SPIRIT...
ON THAT LONG-AGO DAY, I PASSED MY MENTOR'S FIRST TEST--BY ACTING UNSELFISHLY!
I WAS A FOOL TO EVEN THINK OF DESERTING HIM NOW--WHEN HE NEEDS ME MOST! I--
HELP ME, MY SON! HELP ME--!
EH? WHAT'S THAT--??

A MENTAL SUMMONS... FROM THE ANCIENT ONE!
DOES SOME NEW MENACE STRIKE--NOW, WHEN HIS STRENGTH IS AT ITS LOWEST EBB?
NO MATTER WHAT THE THREAT, DR. STRANGE SHALL BATTLE IT...EVEN TO THE DEATH!
NEXT
THE RETURN OF ONE OF THE DEADLIEST FOES OF ALL--
NIGHTMARE!